

**Robert Yamate  
Chargé d'affaires  
OPENING REMARKS**

**FAA Aviation Education Weekend  
June 8, 2012  
Ouakam Airbase, Dakar**

*(As prepared)*

- Mr. the Minister of Infrastructure and Transport
- General Fall (or Military Representative)
- Mr. le Mayor of Ouakam (TBC)
- Mr. XX, the Representative of l'Association Senegalaise des Amis de l'Aviation et de l'Espace (AASAE)
- Madame, the Representative of l'Association des Femmes Professionnelles de l'Aviation Civile (AFPAC).
- Event partners and sponsors,
- Invited Guests, teachers and students,

Welcome to Senegal's first Aviation Education Weekend! This event is organized by the U.S. Embassy and our partners so that students can discover the different aviation carriers: pilot, aircraft inspector, air traffic controller, mechanic, engineer, meteorologist, airport manager and others. I am honored to greet you this morning.

I would like to thank the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure, for joining me today at these opening ceremonies. I also want to thank General FALL, Chef d'Etat Major General des Armees, of the l'Armee de l'Air du Senegal (AAS) for offering the use of the Air Base. Lastly, I would like to thank the organizing partners -- the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration, l'Association Senegalaise des Amis de l'Aviation et de l'Espace (ASAAE), and l'Association des Femmes Professionnelles de l'Aviation Civile (AFPAC). We are grateful for all they have done to help make this Aviation Education Weekend a success.

On a personal note, this event is very meaningful to me. I clearly remember the first trip I took in an airplane. Seeing a giant jet aircraft take off or land still inspires me. For you, it may also trigger dreams of escape to distant lands or trips to visit family and friends. But this Aviation Education Weekend is intended to be more than nostalgic. It represents the interest the United States has in working hand-in-hand with our African partners to develop future aviation experts so that we can all benefit from aviation's influences on our economies and the global experience in offers in connecting different cultures.

Like most Americans, I am very interested in the free movement of trade, people and ideas. We seldom stop to think of the enormous benefits of air transport on the well-being of millions of people around the world. Global air transport is a significant driver of sustainable economic, social and cultural development. Last year, over 2 billion passengers traveled on scheduled

flights alone. At the same time, nearly 40 million tons of freight was carried by air, from fresh produce to computer equipment to medical supplies. Today, some 32 million jobs are linked to civil aviation through employment in airlines, airports, air navigation services and aerospace industries. Aviation's extended global impact is estimated to be equivalent to nearly 8 percent of the global Gross Domestic Product!

Even now, at a time when many people around the world are overwhelmed with the negative effects of the current economic crisis, it is important to note that, in Africa, aviation demand still continues to grow. In Africa alone, about 300,000 people are directly employed in aviation fields, and when including indirect employment more than 6 million jobs are supported by aviation. Forecasts for Africa indicate that passenger numbers are expected to triple from 67 million in 2010 to over 150 million in 2030. Africa supports 762,000 flights per year at 371 commercial airports, by 256 airlines with over 1,000 aircraft. Now may be just the right time for African airlines to capitalize on the possibilities of expanding their markets – but they will need highly trained employees to succeed!

All of the benefits of air transport have been made possible because air travel today is safe, secure, efficient and accessible. The mission of the world aviation community is to maintain safety and continuously improve performance. A safe and secure aviation system is essential to all our nations as well as to all of us as individuals. We all want to maintain current levels of safety and security even as aviation grows. To accomplish this we will need to overcome the overriding challenge facing African aviation today: the skills shortage that poses a considerable short-term obstacle to growth.

Three elements contribute to this manpower shortage: First, there are large numbers of retirements in the aviation sector; second, aviation is severely impacted by brain-drain, that is, highly trained African aviation professionals are snatched up by other developing countries also lacking qualified staff; and lastly, there is a serious shortage of entry-level pilots and other aviation professionals. Encouraging young Africans to enter aviation's highly technical fields is a high priority of the American government.

This is one of the goals of the Safe Skies for Africa program. Through the Safe Skies program, the U.S. government sponsors events like this one to assist aviation entities in Africa to meet international standards.

The main purpose of this event is for Senegal's youth to discover the wide variety of exciting professions that encompass aviation. Experts from all aspects of aviation will be available to discuss their careers one-on-one with students. I welcome the presence of Senegal's civil aviation authorities, security agencies, airport operators, and airline companies. Each of you, as stakeholders, has a very important role to play in the education of our future aviation workforce.

I would like to close my remarks by wishing you all a most successful and educational experience. Please take every advantage of the speakers' insights, expertise, friendship, and encouragement, as well as the exhibits and displays that this weekend offers.